

NCIS Personnel Recognized for Narcotics Law Enforcement Contributions

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WASHINGTON -- Ten distinguished members of the Naval Criminal Investigative Service (NCIS) received awards for their contributions to narcotics law enforcement at the 46th Annual International Drug Enforcement Conference that ended Nov. 4. The conference was hosted by the International Narcotics Enforcement Officers' Association (INEOA) in Hilton Head, South Carolina.

The NCIS awardees were cited for their outstanding job in protecting U.S. forces and maintaining the operational readiness of Navy and Marine Corps personnel.

This year's award recipients were selected from many high caliber candidates. Recipients were first nominated by fellow members and then selected by an awards committee.

NCIS is committed to combating drug use among members of the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps. "Drug use and the climate it creates keeps our troops and their commanders from executing their mission efficiently and effectively, and while we have service members around the world fighting and dying in the global war on terrorism, I feel it is our duty as special agents who serve to protect the people and assets of the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps to do all we can to stop this threat," said Special Agent (SA) Omar Lopez.

Lopez received an INEOA Special Agency Award for his work conducting successful counter-narcotics operations around the Naval Base Ventura County (NBVC). "During a particular counter-narcotics operation," SA Lopez said, "we targeted drug activity in the vicinity of Navy assets and worked with local sheriffs' deputies and other federal agents from ATF, ICE and the DEA to arrest civilian street-level dealers in an effort to reduce the amount of narcotics, specifically crystal methamphetamine, available around Naval Base Ventura County."

Lopez was also directly responsible for the formation of the NBVC Drug Awareness Working Group. According to SA Lopez, "The NBVC Drug Awareness Working Group was created in an effort to educate Navy commands in the area not only about the overall threats posed by drug use in the U.S. Navy, but more specifically to provide real-time information to Navy commands about the local drug threats."

NCIS is also devoted to raising awareness about the harmful effects of drug use. Educating service members about narcotics enhances the quality of Navy and Marine Corps personnel by maintaining a healthy standard and reducing drug-related incidents.

NCIS Investigator Marvin Singleton is one individual who is committed to educating others. He received the INEOA Special Award of Honor for his work in the area of narcotics suppression operations in San Diego.

Singleton has made an impact on the "War on Drugs" through his dedication to NCIS-sponsored narcotics awareness and prevention programs. He has presented narcotics awareness briefings to more than 1500 Naval personnel.

"It's an honor to be recognized," said SA Timothy Rose, who received an INEOA Special Agency Award for his work in Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. As Team Leader of the Special Operations Squad, SA Rose helped form the Regional and Multi-Agency Drug Task Force (RAM-DTF) to facilitate cooperation between NCIS, the Jacksonville Police Department, the Onslow County Sheriff's Office, and the North Carolina State Bureau of Investigations. The cooperative effort has so far been very successful in seizing illegal drugs and drug money in the area.

"While the RAM-DTF was operating, we recorded two of the largest heroin seizures in Onslow County history," said Rose. "The RAM-DTF brings together all of the local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies in Onslow County and focuses their combined resources towards a common goal. It also facilitates an easy exchange of criminal intelligence between all the agencies. Cooperation between different agencies is essential to any productive operation."

NCIS takes its drug-fighting mission all across the globe. Members of a Strike Team located in Japan - SA Edward Gardner, SA Matthew Brackeen, SA William Matteson, and Chief Master-at-Arms Scott Ventrice - received Special Agency Awards for their impact on narcotics distribution around Fleet Activities Yokosuka, Japan. The strike team works with both U.S. and Japanese customs officials to combat the importation of illegal drugs into Japan. In 2004, the strike team conducted a controlled delivery of more than 52,000 tablets of ecstasy valued at \$1.5 million and illegally imported to Japan. Through the operation, they uncovered a transnational criminal conspiracy.

Supervisory Special Agent (SSA) John Nicks, also located in Japan, received the INEOA Special Agency Award as well for his leadership and management skills in leading his strike team on several successful missions. His daily cooperation with local military commanders has enhanced the performance level of his team.

Based in Guam, SA Daniel Simpson has completed more than a dozen narcotics investigations. This past year, he has been praised by command JAG personnel, the DEA, the Guam Police Department, the Guam U.S. Attorney's Office, and the Commonwealth of Northern Marianas Judiciary for his narcotics enforcement efforts on the islands of Guam and Saipan. For his outstanding work, which resulted in the arrest and prosecution of 18 suspects and the recovery of more than \$5,000 in illegal drugs, INEOA recognized him with a Special Agency Award.

SA Jeremy Arellano received an INEOA Commendation Award for his work as the lead NCIS agent in an investigation targeting drug abuse around a U.S. Marine Corps Command. The effort involved cooperation between NCIS and the local sheriff's department. "This investigation was reflective of a team effort, not one person. Given that, I am humbled and extremely grateful to receive the award," said Arellano.

He was instrumental in utilizing cooperating witnesses in an investigation that uncovered drug abuse around a USMC command. By identifying this vulnerability, Arellano eliminated the threat before substantial damage was done to the USMC critical response infrastructure.

"It was rewarding to know that we were able to swiftly clear up the problem so that the commanding officer could worry about more important operational matters," said Arellano.

By recognizing outstanding work in narcotics enforcement, the INEOA hopes to encourage a continued effort in fighting narcotics crime.